

# Professor plays on 'Jeopardy!'

**Professor Sara Orel chosen from 110,000 hopefuls to compete on gameshow**

BY MICHELLE MARTIN  
Staff Reporter

Answer: This associate professor of art history spent a day in February mere feet away from Alex Trebek with a chance to win big bucks.

Question: Who is Sara Orel?

Orel got the chance to be on the set of Jeopardy and mingle with Alex Trebek on Feb. 19. She was chosen out of more than 100,000 potentials.

Orel said "Jeopardy!" is one of her favorite shows. When she came home from work early one Thursday afternoon to watch it she noticed an ad to play the "Jeopardy!" online challenge to be a contestant on the show.

"I signed up," she said. "It's one of those things I've always wanted to do."

Orel said that after registering online and answering a series of timed questions, she received a message three weeks later requesting an interview. Orel said she found out in January that she was selected to compete on "Jeopardy!" on Feb. 19.

"I didn't really think it was going to happen," Orel said. "I was thrilled to get the interview, but I didn't think I was actually going to get on the show."

The potential pool of contestants shrank from 110,000 hopefuls to the 400 people who actually are chosen to

be on the show each year, she said.

Orel said that before competing on the show, there was little she could do to practice.

"People asked me, 'Well, how did you prepare for it?'" she said. "I didn't. Other than try to get a good night's sleep the night before, there's no way you can prepare for it. It's all miscellaneous trivial knowledge — the more you know, the better off you're going to be."

Orel said she wasn't particularly fazed during the game, even though she knew she would eventually be shown to an audience of 12 million.

"I think what surprised me most was that it really wasn't nerve wracking at all," she said. "I didn't think about the people who would be watching. I thought about getting the questions right."

Orel also wasn't bothered by the fact that she was playing for money, she said.

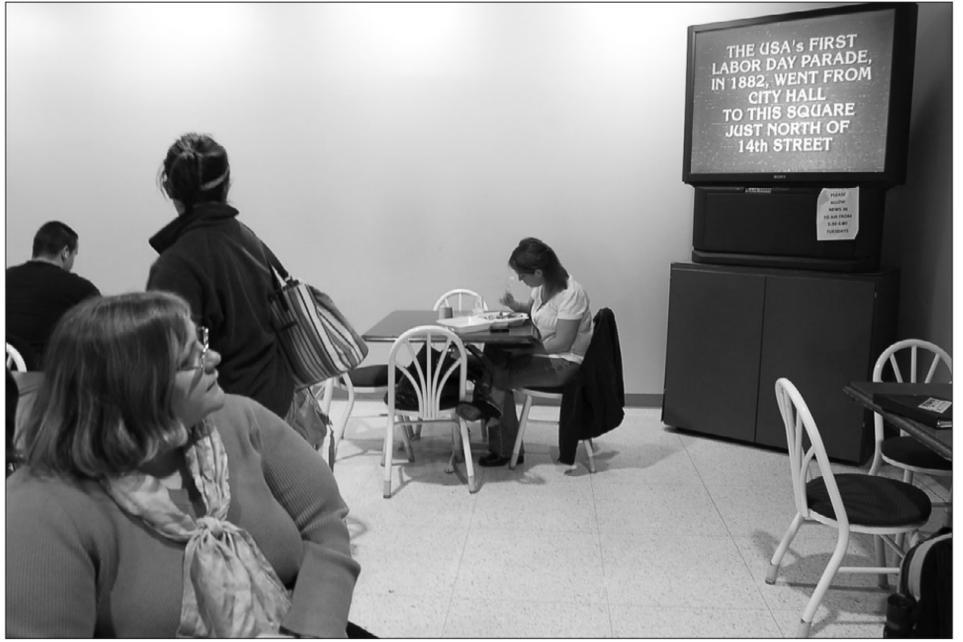
"After the game is over, it suddenly becomes money, but while you're there, you're thinking, 'OK, that person's got 20,000 [points], I've got 20,000 [points], how much do I wager, how much could I afford to lose?'" she said.

Orel said a lot of luck was involved. She said a lot depended on the type of questions given and which ones she had the chance to answer.

"There were times when I tried to ring in, but I was a little bit too late, and I was really happy I hadn't made it because I would have had the wrong thing," she said.

**"I think what surprised me the most was that it wasn't nerve-racking at all!"**

**Sara Orel**  
Associate Professor of Art History



Mark Hardy/Index

**Sara Orel, associate professor of art history, won the chance to be a contestant on the popular gameshow 'Jeopardy!' The episode she was on airs on May 23 at 4:30 p.m. but she is not allowed to say if she won or not.**

Tim Orel, Sara Orel's brother, said he thought the experience was fantastic.

"When she did call me and informed me that she had been selected to actually go out to California, I said it was just terrific, and [I was] excited for her," he said.

Tim Orel and his girlfriend accompanied Sara Orel to California to support her and watched from the studio audience, he said.

"She was very cool and very professional," he said. "She didn't have any kind of pause or nervousness when she got up there."

Tim said he still was worried for his sister from the audience.

"I was just concentrating very hard, trying to send her mental images — and doing whatever I could to send her good karma," he said. "Some of the questions

she got, I was quite honestly amazed that she got."

Sara's breadth of knowledge definitely helped her performance, he said.

"She's always enjoyed the mental challenge activity," Tim said. "She reads a wide variety of things that did help her on some of the questions because the variety of categories could be anything on 'Jeopardy!'"

Tim said Sara's experience inspired him to try out for the show as well.

"I hadn't really thought about what it would be like to do it myself, and then [I watched] her go through it and have so much fun," he said. "I'd like to give it a shot."

Junior Samantha Lyons, one of Orel's students, also said Orel's experience bolstered her dream to one day compete on "Jeopardy!"

"Seeing her actually get on the show, I realized that it was possible, that you actually can get on," she said. "It was kind of inspiring to see that she made it."

Lyons said she was excited when Orel told her class she would be on "Jeopardy!" and she went to Orel's office hours to talk to her about it.

"I've watched 'Jeopardy!' all my life, and you never expect someone you know to be on the show," she said. "So for a teacher here to do that, I just think it's incredible, and I was really excited for her."

Lyons said she is very proud of her professor for competing.

"I'm sure she did really well," she said. "She's really knowledgeable about everything. She's very passionate about what she teaches."

But Orel said she cannot divulge whether or not she actually won. To find out, tune in May 23.

# Bulldog award treats students for good work

BY LAURA PRATHER  
Staff Reporter

The newest member of Truman's bulldog family is polished and comes with a plaque. The bulldog, which remains to be named, can be found on display at the Career Center, which is its current owner.

The bulldog, better known as the Bulldog Award, represents outstanding customer service by a department or office on Truman's campus, said Curt Devan, director of human resources. The Staff Development and Recognition Committee, a subcommittee of the Staff Council, created the award last semester and presented it to the Career Center on Feb. 6, Devan said.

Career Coordinator Polly Matteson said no one knew the Career Center was chosen to receive the award until the committee showed up and bestowed it on everyone. Matteson said the entire staff was thrilled to be acknowledged for its dedication to the center's customers.

"I feel very strongly that we try to assist everyone that comes in," she said. "... Everything we do is geared toward helping our customers, our students, our alumni. We help them make connections with future employers or to find careers that they're excited about. That's our goal. I feel like that all goes along with customer service, and it's an intrinsic award as well for us."

Devan said that since he came to Truman in fall 2004, he has worked to create awards that give public recognition to staff members. He said that prior to the Bulldog Award, only individual award programs existed within the Staff



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

**The newly established Bulldog award recognizes outstanding departments or staff members on campus. The current owner of the polished dog is the Career Center.**

Council. The new distinction is important to build team morale in the various departments, he said.

"It's team-oriented," Devan said. "It's the entire office staff working together to achieve the mission of that office. They're working as one person, really, trying to make sure that the mission is accomplished within the department, and it takes everyone to do that."

Devan, who formed the Staff Development and Recognition subcommittee, said the award originally was going to be called the STAR Award, which stood for

Shared Team Achievement Recognition. Then last semester, he said he found an old bulldog statue at an antique store and thought the University's mascot better emphasized Truman's spirit and customer service mission.

Any member of the faculty or staff can recommend an office for the award by submitting a written or typed nomination, Devan said.

"The nominations come into the Staff Development and Recognition Committee, and they review them for consistency so it is, in fact, the best customer service practice we've seen by far," he said.

Each recipient of the bulldog keeps it for four to six weeks until the next recipient is presented with the award, Devan said. Then the department receives a large, personalized plaque so department members can remember the achievement and continue to practice quality team customer service, he said.

To initially promote the award, Devan said the committee showed off the bulldog to various offices on campus and informed them of what it represented. He said that by doing this, the committee wanted to spread the word about the new

distinction and energize staff to continue to examine and improve customer service practices.

"We think that by the fact that the award's out there and people are aware of it, they are looking at themselves differently," Devan said.

The new award, which currently sits on the Career Center's front desk, not only calls attention to the staff's hard work but also allows the full-time staff to show its appreciation to the 26 student workers this semester, Matteson said. Without them, she said the center's benchmark of service wouldn't be reached or surpassed like it is every day.

"The basic story behind us, I think, is we have several student workers that work in the Career Center, and they are the frontline people that work with the customers, and our customers are you, the students, mostly," she said.

Although the Bulldog Award only has been awarded once, Matteson said she really likes what the award stands for and thinks it will continue to be an indispensable reward in the future.

"You do the work, and it's self-fulfilling, but to have someone else realize that you're doing a good job is always a compliment," she said. "So I think it should reinforce to the students that what we're doing and the service that they're offering is valuable."

Chuck Parks, PC Support for ITS and chairman of the Staff

Development and Recognition committee, said he hopes the University community continues to feel the need to recognize its hard-working staff members.

"I've been on campus for 28 years, and I know a lot of people, and they deserve an award," he said.

Parks said he doesn't think the low number of nominations so far is because members aren't worthy, but rather because people see it as one more thing to do in their already hectic workday. He said the Staff Development and Recognition Committee only

has received one nomination to be considered for the next recipient of the Bulldog Award. The committee was hoping to honor the next department in March but won't be able to until they receive additional nominations, he said.

The recognition is important because great customer service benefits an office, its customers and everyone else with whom it comes into contact, Parks said.

"Our customers are what makes us who we are," he said. "Without customers, we don't have jobs here. Like I said, happy customers, happy workers and so on."

Parks said the Staff Development and Recognition Committee has received three nominations and is in the process of choosing the Bulldog Award's next recipient, which Parks said he hopes will be honored sometime in March.

**"You do the work, and it's self-fulfilling, but to have someone else realize that you're doing a good job is always a compliment."**

**Polly Matteson**  
Career Coordinator

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